



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

Homeland Security agencies arrest two men, seize alien-smuggling yacht

BROWNSVILLE, Texas — Two men from Brownsville face federal criminal charges today after U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents arrested them over the weekend for their role in smuggling six Mexican nationals by boat to Corpus Christi, Texas.



According to the ICE report, the six men were first smuggled into the United States from Mexico in McAllen, Texas. Then they were transported to South Padre Island, Texas. The yacht named "Poca Mas" left the Sea Ranch Marina in South Padre Island early Sunday morning. Shortly after lunch the yacht arrived in Corpus Christi, Texas, ICE agents arrested the two boat operators and the six smuggled illegal aliens, and seized the yacht.

The owner of the yacht, Mack Daniel Bryant, and deckhand operator Baldemar Valadez Jr., made their initial appearances in federal court this morning to face charges in connection with the alleged alien-smuggling plot, which included picking up the migrants at South Padre Island on Sunday then transporting them to Corpus Christi.

"This case shows how desperate alien smugglers are in their attempt to circumvent immigration law by using a luxurious yacht to disguise the illegal activity taking place," said Alonzo Pena, special agent-in-charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in San Antonio. "Using a yacht to smuggle aliens does not diminish the risks to the aliens being smuggled. Alien smugglers routinely demonstrate how little regard they have for their human cargo."

The migrants told ICE agents they paid \$1,500 each in smuggling fees. Of the six aliens arrested for entering the country without inspection, three of them will remain in the United States as material witness in the criminal case.

ICE agents in Brownsville and Corpus Christi were assisted by: the U.S. Coast Guard South Padre Island, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Air and Marine Units in Brownsville and Houston, and the Corpus Christi Police Department. ICE, the Coast Guard and CBP are all agencies under the Department of Homeland Security.

ICE agents warn that smuggling organizations may exploit legitimate businesses to accomplish their illegal smuggling activities. The public can report suspicious activity to ICE's toll free hotline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.